

[How I Made Out]

Beliefs and Customs - Folk Stuff

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK [11?] Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Herman Spector

ADDRESS 4121 Third Avenue, N.Y.C.

DATE January 24, 1939

SUBJECT HOW I MADE OUT - (Interview with Fur Union Member)

1. Date and time of interview Afternoon of January 23rd.
2. Place of interview Headquarters, Fur Workers Union West 26th Street
3. Name and address of informant Anonymous
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

None

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

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6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Hallway entrance to union offices. Hole-in-wall coffepot, run as concession by elderly bearded Jew, at one side. Building has a run-down look, was formerly branch of American Railway Express. Now middleaged and young men soberly shuffle from floor to floor, greet each other, stand about in groups on dusty stone floor. Signs and placards announcing activities are stuck up on walls of main meeting room, benches and tables thrown about haphazardly. Chance interview netted the story.

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

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NAME OF WORKER Herman Spector

ADDRESS 4121 Third Avenue, N.Y.C.

DATE January 24, 1939

SUBJECT HOW I MADE OUT - (Interview With member of Fur Workers Union) HOW I MADE OUT

I am a furrier twenty-two years. Troo a relation I got into it. Dot time I worked six monts for notting, den stotted about five dollars a week. Den was a union from AF of L, de setup was not like now, de people dot were at de head, dey were not for de benefit of de workers but for deir own end of it. At de outset people could not recognize dot it was a sell, dot dey were selling de workers, dey used to get around two, tree hundred people to vote in de elections, den de next day you heard tw two , tree tousand voted. Elections were sold in

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a batch, dey had already strongarm guys - dis was 1917, 18, 19 - till it came de workers learned dey didn't riprisant de working people.

From de real struggle I didn't know, for de simple rizzon I was on de udda side at dot time. In 1926 I got into business, I had my own place, I stood about, tree, four years, den I quit, I should say it quit me, I went out wid plenty of losses. I tried de best for my business, but to tell de troot, it was scabbing on one side, dough I didn't work at scab work, still, I can tell anybody about it now, I am not ashamed. In my mind den I wanted to maze money, dis was de ideology, it was not in my mind I would have to be a worker.

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You see, I developped up till eighteen a week in 1917, den I got forty-five a week in 1918, I ended ninety-five a week. Dot time we woulda gotten tree or four hundred a week if we had de right liddership, we went out on strike dot time for maybe five percent, and for de business agent was someting too, I noticed it was a racketeering. At mittings I was told to sit down, if I wanted to take poht in discussions dey said nutting doing. 1920 gave me de first blow. When de union lost de strike. In my eyes would never be lost de strike if de union had been for de workers. So after dis I couldn't believe de union riprisanted de workers.

In de old days it happened, when workers had a little bit of struggle, de union sent professional gangsters. Dey took em in, dey gave em books, and de were sitting in de shop wid revolvass. We had den Big Louis, we had de Strawberry gang - plenty! De only ting what I stotted to witness when I was a boss in 1926, I had workers which dey told me dey did have now a good liddership, but I laughed out of dem, I wouldn't believe dis. I used to read de [Forwards?], dot precious dirty shytt, and of course it turned everyting upside down. So I didn't wanna believe till when I got troo wid business, den I stotted to develop, I used to see when dey attacked de union, de gangsters, in my paper, de [Forwards?], de [Times?], evvyting dey put on de udder side.

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Today conditions which we suffer is not de fault of de union, dis is de fault of de system. Sure de slack sizzon affects us. Many have to go on Relief. Dose who are unemployed, I believe de maturity of dem live on de sweat and blood of deir children, mainly dey are elderly people. Twenty-seven to tirty-five are de fellers who really suffer when dey are out of work, for de rizzon dey are along and dey got small children. People in dis trade are helpless, de maturity, 3 some go out to sell socks, some drive a taxi when dey are not working, some sells razorblades, dey are not mechanics, dey rely on dis trade. Asthma and T.B. is predominant, skin disease, high and low blood-pressure a lot. I believe dis is from de foot dey haven't got enough to live on, dey are worrying, what else? Also dere is tremendous speedup, de boss eyes you like a beast, you have to do more work today dan ever before. But de union is for de workers, wid good liddership, even dough we suffer now from worse dan scabs, we have people who are here to do damage politically, dey try to go out and demoralize de workers, if dey don't work its de union's fault dey say, to me dey are worse dan scabs. A cholera zull dem hopen!

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